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A GLANCE AT THE CHICAGO ACADEMY OF SCIENCES.

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In 1857, a society for the promotion of science, was formed in Chicago, taking the name of "The Chicago Academy of Natural Sciences." About \$1,500 was subscribed, a room taken in the Saloon Building, corner of Clark and Lake Streets, a few cases were made, and a museum was begun. In 1859, the society was incorporated by the name of "The Chicago Academy of Sciences."

In the winter of 1863-4, several prominent citizens of Chicago resolved to found a Scientific Museum in the Metropolis of the Northwest. A large sum of money was accordingly subscribed, an Act of Incorporation, (1865) as now published, was obtained and the Academy was placed upon a solid foundation. Mr. Robert Kennicott was appointed first Director of the Museum. Collections rapidly rolled in and rooms were taken at the Metropolitan Building, corner of Randolph and La Salle Streets. In 1865 Mr. Kennicott, with a party of young naturalists went to Alaska to survey a route for a telegraph line, then proposed to connect North America with Russia. From this expedition Mr. Kennicott never returned. He died suddenly of heart failure on the banks of the Yukon River. After the death of Mr. Kennicott, Dr. William Stimpson was appointed Director of the Museum.

June 7, 1866, the building in which the Museum was placed was partially destroyed by fire. The collections were much damaged,

and parts were wholly destroyed. This calamity brought the question of a permanent building to head, and a lot on Wabash Avenue, north of Van Buren Street was purchased and a fire-proof building erected. The first meeting was held January 28, 1868. The building was of brick 55 feet by 50 in area, and 50 feet high; the floors were of brick and iron the stairways and principal doors of iron, and the windows were covered with iron shutters. The basement was used for laboratory and storeroom; the first floor for library and offices, while the whole upper part, surrounded by two wide galleries, was occupied by Museum. From this time until the great fire the growth of the Academy, under the skillful management of Dr. Stimpson was rapid, and much valuable original work was done.

On the 9th of October, 1871, this building, in spite of the fire-proof qualities which it was supposed to possess, was totally destroyed in the great conflagration which laid Chicago in ashes,—specimens, library, manuscripts, and apparatus—all that was left of the once invaluable collections was a sheet of printed paper and a few pieces of broken pottery. Within twelve days after the fire, however, a meeting was held and steps taken towards a restoration of the Academy. A circular was issued inviting the sympathy and help of corresponding societies, which elicited many immediate and liberal responses. The loss of his priceless manuscripts so prostrated Dr. Stimpson that he died on the 26th of May, 1872.

It was soon determined to rebuild upon the old site, and upon the same plan modified by such improvements as experience could suggest. Upon the front of the same lot a business block of the first class, four stories in height was erected. The restored building was occupied in the fall of 1873. The funds at the disposal of the Academy being insufficient for their needs, they borrowed such additional sums as were necessary, securing the lender by a mortgage upon the whole property. They estimated that the income from the property would provide a sinking fund by which the original indebtedness would be paid when it became due. The scheme, however, proved disastrous. The new building did not pay the interest on the indebtedness, and after a term of years, in process of law, the whole property was lost to the Academy.

When, in 1886, the Academy was finally driven from its home on Wabash Avenue, the Exposition Company received the collections within its building upon the lake front and paid the expense of their

maintenance. But in its turn, the exposition company was ousted and its building destroyed. The property of the Academy was sent to storage where it remained for several years. In 1891 when the affairs of the Academy seemed to have reached their lowest ebb, a proposition was made to unite its fortunes with the University of Chicago, then just organizing. This the Academy was not willing to do, feeling that in time the identity of the organization would become lost in that of the University. In 1892 a generous citizen of Chicago Mr. Matthew Laflin, seconded and aided by his son George K. Laflin promised to give a sum adequate for the purpose of erecting a building which should stand for all time as the home of the Academy. In addition to this, it was ascertained that it was possible for the commissioners of Lincoln Park to aid in the prosecution of such an enterprise by offering a site and additional endowment. The result is one of the most perfect museum buildings situated in one of the most beautiful parks in the world. In June, 1893, the corner stone was laid and Nov. 1, 1894, the building was formally thrown open to the public.

The new building is a plain rectangular structure measuring 150 by 50 feet. The material of the building is Bedford stone and the architecture is Romanesque. Over the central doorway is the inscription MATTHEW LAFLIN MEMORIAL. The interior is decorated in old gold and ivory giving a soft tone to the light. There is electricity, running water, electric bells, elevator, and all the modern improvements which go to make up a perfect museum.

The library contains 5000 scientific works. It communicates with the museum by two stairways. The museum hall is 150x50x30 feet, with one wide gallery. Upon the main floor there are 24 large cases, in the gallery the same number with the addition of a large rail case. Unlike most museums *there is not a dark corner in the building*, from cellar to garret.

The collections consist for the most part, of North American productions, and are most complete so far as the valley of the Mississippi is concerned. In Mollusca, the collection is rich in North American forms.

With a new building and the best of facilities, it is believed that the Academy will again occupy a prominent place among Scientific bodies, and regain the prestige and fulfil the promise of its earlier days.